



THREE SHORT STORIES

THE
HOME-COMING OF JESSICA

Mary E. Wilkins

AN IDYL OF CENTRAL PARK

Brander Matthews

THE ROMANCE OF A SOUL

Robert Grant

E. C.

THESE STORIES AND ILLUSTRATIONS
ARE REPRODUCED FROM THE
FOLLOWING ISSUES OF THE

WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION

The Home-Coming of Jessica

NOVEMBER, 1901

An Idyl of Central Park

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The Romance of a Soul

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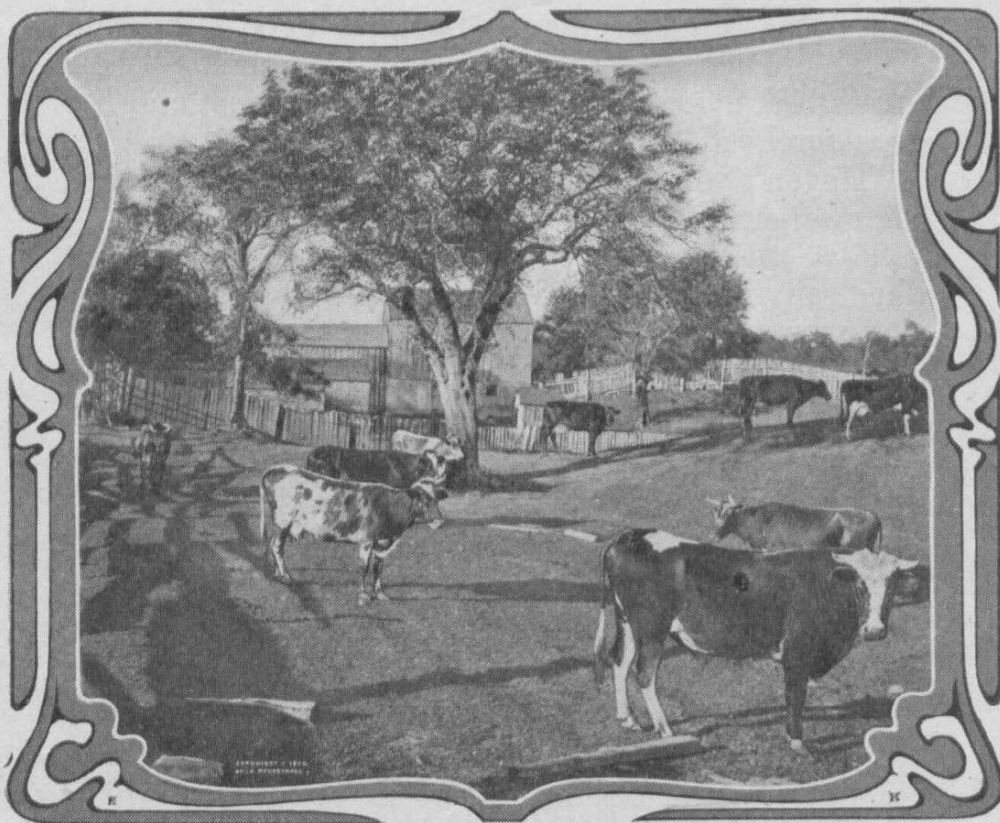
IT IS difficult to tell what led Jessica to forsake the old farm and her parents in the first place. She must have had a smoldering ambition, or perhaps not so much ambition as restlessness, although she looked staid, even stolid. Jessica was a pretty girl, with a placid style of prettiness, an overlaying of smooth pink and white curves, and waves of fair hair on a quiver of nerves, as is the case with many daughters of New England. All her life long she had lived in that farm-house, a century old, yet kept up to the level of the present by the effort of the living; she had looked out on the same prospect, fair enough—an undulating sweep of hills, beyond a silver ribbon of river, with green meadows in the foreground. She had seen the same flowering bushes in the front yard put forth every spring, the same trees leaf and blossom; she had seen the same faces in church every Sunday, the same people pass the house—men with the peaceful slouch of unquestioning toil, women moving with that awkward hitch of advance which comes to a woman from entire acqui-

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escence with hard circumstance—and she had become wearied to the pitch of savage irritation. She had even wearied of her own father and mother. Of her father, who had never taken a day's vacation, and looked upon one as a transgression of the commandment of the gods; of her mother, who would not yield to advancing age and weakness, but who persisted in her old ways with a sort of fierce obstinacy.

"There's no use in my trying to help mother, she won't be helped," Jessica often said to herself. Then she would go up-stairs to her own room, sit down by the window, and gaze out at that same old prospect which came gradually to fill her with utter loathing, a sort of spiritual nausea which she could not understand. If she only could have seen one different curve of the hills; if the silver river would have taken another bend; if some morning she could have discovered a maple instead of that old cherry-tree in the front yard. She arrived at that point where the wonted rasped her; she had the antithesis of homesickness. She looked around her room, and fairly hated everything which she saw. There was the old pineapple bedstead in which she had slept ever since she could remember; there was the old mahogany bureau, those old china vases which had belonged to her grandmother on the mantel-shelf, the old sweeps of tasseled dimity at the windows, the braided rugs which would outlast her. Neither her father nor her mother had any conception of her state of mind; the horror of sameness which overcame her like the sting from a burn every time she entered a room or looked out of a window was beyond their comprehension. There had been for them during their lives no taking of their knotted hands from the plow, and yet they were not unintelligent people. They were simply unquestioning, with no spirit of rebellion, and could not imagine it in their daughter. When she revolted at last they were aghast, as much at a loss as if they had discovered a changeling in their home cradle.

One evening when spring was upon them, and the restless ferment of it stirring Jessica's blood to its utmost action, she spoke. It was a very warm evening in early May. The father and mother were seated after tea in the great living-room, one preparing potatoes for planting, the other mending; neither ever thought of sitting out of doors on the porch in the



"The same old prospect which came gradually to fill her with utter loathing"

delicious cool. They had not been used to that. It would have seemed to them like working with their feet out of the ruts of labor. Her father's clumsy clothes hung loosely over his old sinews and muscles; so did her mother's. The faces of both had a wintry glow of health, like winter apples. They were of long-lived, sturdy races, both of them. There was not

a gray hair in her mother's abundant locks, which she twisted uncompromisingly every morning; her father was bald, with a stout white stubble of beard under a straight firm line of a mouth. Jessica stood before them, and spoke. "Look at here, father and mother," she said—her speech was provincial, although she had been through the high school—"I don't know what you are going to say, but—" She hesitated a second, and both stared at her. "Look at here," she said again. Then she reddened and trembled. Little pulses beat evidently in her firm white throat and her clear forehead.

"Haven't you fed the hens and the turkeys?" asked the mother.

That was Jessica's work. She liked that, if she liked anything. There was something about the ever-present greed of the scurrying feathered things which gave her a sense of a break in the monotony which so irritated her, she could not have told why. Possibly it was because they had no sense of monotony, and the desire for food and its gratification was as new as when first they gobbled a kernel of corn.

"It ain't that," she replied. Then she plunged at once into her subject. "I've been talkin' with Addie Rose," she said, "and she's goin' to the Oaks at Silver Beach next week for table-girl, and I've got a chance to go with her, and—I'm goin'."

It was characteristic of Jessica's mother that she did not use the one argument in opposition which would seemingly have occurred to her at once. She said not a word about her need of her daughter's assistance on the farm, although summer was at hand and she had no women help, and presently there would be two hired men to cook for instead of one. It was also characteristic of Jessica that she did not give her true reason for going.

"I'm goin' to get four dollars a week besides my board," she said, simply, as if that was all she had thought of.

Her father looked at her, and his face was more nervous than his wife's; it betrayed a character more like that of the girl's. "There ain't no need of your goin', so far as the money is concerned," he said, with a brief grunt.

"I ain't never earned a cent in my whole life," returned Jessica.

"Your father and me have got enough for one girl, I guess," said her mother, bridling. A color stole over her thin, rigorous face. "You have all you need."

"If you want a new dress—" said her father.

"She don't want a new dress," said her mother. "She has all she needs."

"I want to go and earn some money," said Jessica. "Addie's goin'."

Her father scowled over his potatoes. "I don't know about that big hotel," he said.

"Four dollars a week is a good deal of money," said Jessica. She knew her ground. Money was the golden apple of existence to these thrifty parents of hers.

"I'd like to know what you'd do with it," her mother said.

"Oh, I don't know; I could put most of it in the savings-bank," replied Jessica, carelessly.

"You needn't think you're goin' away and earn money and waste it on gimcracks like Addie Rose," said her mother, severely.

"No," said her father; "your mother and me can buy you all you need yet awhile."

"I don't want to waste it on gimcracks," declared Jessica, "and I'll do just what you tell me to with the money."

"I don't know anything better than the Milltown savings-bank," said her father, thoughtfully. "They're real honest there, and it's four-per-cent interest."

"I'd just as soon put it in there," said Jessica.

"How long will you be gone?" asked her father.

"Twelve weeks."

"Forty-eight dollars," said her father, and the girl knew it was settled.

When she went up to her room that night she was a different person and she looked out on a different landscape. It was colored with her own hopes and anticipations. The boughs of the old cherry-tree tossed in a radiance of the soul; the river ran a race of the spirit; the hills beyond towered into imagination.

As she looked out of her window before going to bed a dark figure came down the road, hesitated a second at the gate, then passed on. She knew who it was, and laughed, and the laugh was no less gay because it was in a measure cruel to herself. She knew that the young man was David Lapham, that he had come to see her, and that he had retreated on seeing the light in her room, concluding that she had gone to bed. She felt his disappointment more keenly than he felt it himself; she wanted to see him, yet in her morbid state of mind he represented the worst monotony of it all. He aroused her at times to a more savage revolt than anything else. She seemed, without being fully conscious of it, to recognize in him and her feeling for him the eternal repetition and monotony of love and passion and life itself, and she became almost blasphemous. She watched him going back with a triumph of emancipation which yet stung. She had known him ever since they were both children; she had never had a minute's doubt of his love for her, that he wanted more than anything else to make her his wife. He owned the next farm, his parents being dead. He rented the house, and boarded with his tenants, who assisted with the farm-work. If she married him he would come to live with her, and her old life would go on and on and on, only magnified and doubled and trebled, as by a system of mirrors. There were times when she fairly hated David Lapham, and yet there was something about the cant of his head when he repassed the

house which gave her pain. She knew well enough that he had heard of her intended flitting, that he would come the next evening to see her. She resolved to evade him, and did so. She went over to Addie Rose's. The next day was Sunday, and she did not go to evening service, thereby not giving him a chance to accompany her home, and she went early to bed that night, after having again seen him pass her window.

She went away with Addie Rose the next week to the great sea-shore resort, not having seen him at all. The day after reaching her destination came a letter, which she did not answer. She wrote to her mother on her arrival, but to no one else. Her work was distasteful and arduous, and she realized for the first time how much her obstinate old mother had taken from her girlish shoulders; her quarters were uncomfortable, but she had no thought of giving in. She had not even on the border of the great ocean, and in such entirely new surroundings, the freedom and change which she had anticipated. The girls who worked with her were largely of her own class; she still remained in her own element, on the boundaries of another forbidden one. After her work was done at night she used to linger around the windows of the great ball-room and wonder if in there, in an entirely different existence governed by entirely different conditions, was the break in the monotony which she so loathed. Passing the dishes over dainty silken and muslin shoulders at meal-time, she had a realization of a gulf across which her very soul yearned. "I can't see as it is so very different here from what it is at home," she said to Addie Rose; but the other girl colored sweetly and half laughed. She had fallen in love with the head waiter, who was a college student working during the vacation. Jessica had little sympathy with her. The head waiter was the son of a farmer; he had ambition, but it looked as if there was little chance for him. Once she said so to Addie.

"If the old folks die, and Albert hasn't got anything but the farm, you'll have to go there to live. I can't see that you'll be any differently situated; it will be the same old thing over again."

"It's the old that's the new," replied the other girl, with a wisdom of poetry that Jessica did not grasp.

"Oh, well, he's a good fellow, and I'm glad if you're happy," she said.

"Don't you ever miss somebody?" asked Addie, meaningly.

Jessica colored angrily. "I don't believe in missing folks!" she retorted.

"Sometimes you do what you don't believe in doing," said Addie.

Jessica, who roomed with her, turned over and said no more, pretending to be asleep; but she could not put away her memories; the full moonlight lay in the stuffy little room, and the thought of her honest, simple lover seemed to be a part of it.

The great summer hotel closed the first of October. Jessica had her precious forty-eight dollars, and was to go home, but a girl from Boston, Maud Simmons, invited her to spend a week with her. "I'm going to try for a chance in Boston, and maybe you can get one, too," she said. Jessica hesitated a little. There was no harm in the girl, but she was not of her sort. The simple, reserved country girls of her own home were a notch above Maud, and Jessica realized the fact, although dimly. But the longing for freedom and the dislike to return to her old surroundings overcame her. She wrote home about the invitation, and obtained consent to go with her new friend to Boston, although it was three days before the letter came.

When the hotel closed, and Jessica went to Boston, for the first time she felt her own swimming stroke. The life into which she plunged was different. It was respectable enough, there was no doubt of that, but devoid of dignity. Maud's mother had been in the Salvation Army before her marriage, and her

father was a janitor. On entering their home she entered the utterly crude. She was jarred without knowing why or how. Maud spent her summer's earnings at once in cheap finery, and Jessica fell a victim to the force of example. She despised the hat she bought one day, and despised herself for her recognition that she looked well in it.

"It's awful becomin'," said Maud; "and Jack Bascom thinks so, too."

Jessica colored hotly. Jack Bascom had some obscure connection with a variety theater, a handsome young fellow who looked like an actor. Presently he came to see Jessica every night; that was after she obtained employment in the restaurant with Maud. Jessica hesitated about accepting, as the local newspaper put it, the position. Going to work in a city restaurant was a vastly different thing from waiting on table in a summer hotel. There one was almost sure of companionship of one's superiors as well as of one's equals, but this was different. But she yielded; every time she thought of returning to the old life a sickness of revolt came upon her, and she had begun to be fascinated by Jack Bascom. She thought very little of David Lapham in those days. The glamour of the new was still upon her.

She boarded with Maud Simmons, and was in the cheapest froth of city life. Jack Bascom got them frequent passes for the theater. She bought herself a gay silk blouse, and arranged her hair in the extreme of the style. She learned various things which her old life in the country would never have taught; and yet the effect of these things was superficial, the foundations were too solid to be shaken. The monotony of simplicity and dignity had struck too deep roots in a character which had also the great benefit of heredity.

All at once, two days before Thanksgiving, she learned something; she had a sudden glimpse of depths below the froth of things. She learned that

Jack Bascom was married. Maud laughed at her for the way she took it. "Good gracious, what if he is," she said. "His wife's a bad lot, and he can get divorced and marry you if you want him to."

"A married man!" gasped Jessica.



"Her old home as she knew it in the autumn,

"What of it?" demanded the other girl. "I knew you could take care of yourself or I would have told you before. Jack can get a divorce."

"I'm goin' home," said Jessica, suddenly.

Maud stared at her. "On account of that?"

"On account of everything. I want to see my father and mother, and it's Thanksgiving time, and—" Jessica's lip quivered.

Maud continued to stare at her. "I know who will step into your shoes if you walk out," said she.



with its quiet fields and its air of peace "

Jessica made no reply.

"You don't mean you are goin' to leave the restaurant?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, Nell Jones will be in there in your place

next week, and if you leave Boston she'll get Jack," said Maud.

"A married man!" said Jessica.

"Oh, Lord; didn't I tell you he can get divorced! He told me so. Nell will get him if you don't."

"Let her," replied Jessica, shortly.

The two girls were in their room. She looked at a theater poster which Bascom had given her and which was tacked on the wall. It gave her a feeling of nausea, and in contrast to its gaudy shabbiness and what it stood for came the thought of her old home as she knew it in the autumn, with its quiet fields and its air of peace. She did not see Bascom again. That night when he called she refused to go down, and she heard Maud and her mother laughing loudly down-stairs after he had gone. He had not gone with that cant of the head with which poor David Lapham had gone away that last night at home.

The day before Thanksgiving Jessica started for home. Her native village was about a hundred miles from Boston. She had not written to tell her parents of her going to work in the restaurant, although they had not positively forbidden it, and she felt some resentment in consequence, and had written less frequently. Although she returned as innocent as when she left, she had a sensation of guilt. Knowledge had been forced upon her, and she was trying to turn her back upon it, but it seemed to have eyes for her every thought. She wondered how her parents would welcome her, and her wonder deepened to fear.

As she went on in the rattling train she became gradually conscious that a change was over her, that she was not the girl who had left nearly six months before. Absence and abstinence had awakened those old loves and longings which overindulgence had turned to disgust. She began watching eagerly for familiar objects. The sight of the stations as she neared home made her heart leap; patches of woodland which had been growing ever since she could

remember rushed past her like old friends. She felt like one drowning, filled to ecstasy with visions of the past. It seemed to her that she could not wait, that she must go faster, faster, that she must leap from the train. She longed so for her father and mother and David and every little detail of her home that it was like an agony of hunger and thirst.

When she got off at the familiar station she reeled. She thought at first that she could not walk. They had set her trunk on the platform, the station-master was at supper, and there was no team there. She thought with a sob in her throat of her father's old white horse and covered wagon, and then set out almost at a run. Her way lay between woods. It was late afternoon, with the western sky cold with violet and gold. The branches of the trees were rattling in a northwest wind. As she hurried on an awful feeling of doubt and homelessness came upon her. How angry were they? How deep a gage had the love of her parents? What might they not suspect? She thought of Jack Bascom, and rage shot through her like a lance—rage and shame. She felt a great contempt for herself and her weakness. What would David say? He might have taken up with some other girl. Well, let him, so long as she had her father and mother and her home.

The hunger and thirst for her home and the old familiar things deepened until she was in an agony. She ran faster.

She began to reflect how it was the day before Thanksgiving, how she had written only two weeks before that she could not be home for it. It surprised her now that she could ever have been so heartless as to have felt that she did not care to see her parents. She thought of the days of preparation, of her mother busy with pies and preserves and sweetmeats. She thought of the great turkey-gobbler that was to have been sacrificed for the occasion; how her father had talked about him for months.

Then she came in sight of the red roofs of the old place, and from the open field near by she heard a throaty note of rage; turning she discovered the gobbler, and in another instant he was charging toward her. Jessica wore a red dress—a cheaply stylish suit purchased at a bargain-sale in the city—and it aroused the great bird's ire. He advanced upon her, ruffling with fury. At first she did not think of fear, she, a country girl, who had been used to feathered enemies all her life, but finally she became alarmed. She fled from side to side; but her adversary had the advantage of wings as well as feet, and Jessica's feet trembled. She cried out to him with no effect; that flutter of red before his eyes seemed to make a maniac of him. There was not a soul in sight. She kept her hands up ready to defend her face and eyes. Her heart began to fail her. An uncanny feeling came over her. It was as if this great bird represented the spirit of the dear old home which she had despised and forsaken. He was the sentinel to ward her off from her paradise which she had scorned, and loved too late. The turkey-gobbler came faster and faster, with sidewise rushes, and his wings fanned her. It was then that she thought she heard the sound of wheels. Somebody was coming. In her desperation she called out just as David Lapham came into sight around the turn of the road with his ox-team. He took in the situation at a glance, for he leaped down from his high perch on the load of wood, whip in hand, and that was the end of the comic tragedy of Jessica's home-coming.

When David, leaving his oxen standing in the road, escorted Jessica safely to her door, he was laughing, although his face was white. "The big gobbler scared her," he said, in explanation of her trembling.

Jessica's mother, who was rolling pies at the kitchen table, was startled at the sight of her daughter, and came forward with the tears rolling down her cheeks. She looked at her as if she could devour her, but she

did not embrace her. "So you thought you'd come, after all," she said.

"Yes," replied Jessica, still feeling uncertain as to how she was to be received.

Jessica's father came in, and the girl hardly knew him for the light in his face. He even laughed when David repeated the tale of the turkey-gobbler. "Thought we wouldn't kill him as long as she wasn't comin'," he said; "didn't need such a big one just for two people. But now— And mebbe you, David—"

"I won't have him killed!" cried Jessica. "He—he treated me as I deserved for staying away so long. I deserved just such a welcome. I won't have him killed!"

Jessica broke down and began to cry. She had cried very seldom in her whole life.

Her father hesitated. He was not a demonstrative man and did not quite know how to meet tears from a woman. Then he came close to her and pulled off her cheap hat and smoothed her hair. "Don't you fret; he sha'n't be killed," he said. "There's one most as big, and every bit as ugly, confound his picture!"

Jessica's mother said nothing, but she went into the pantry to get some little turnovers that Jessica used to be fond of, and wiped the tears away angrily with her apron.

"Be you goin' back, Jessica?" asked David Lapham, who was standing by the kitchen stove whip in hand, and whose face now and then broke into a smile, though it was still white and perplexed.

"No, never, never!" cried Jessica.

That night she and David sat up late. A great turkey was in the pantry all trussed and stuffed ready for roasting the next day, the house was full of the fragrance of spice and raisins and sweets, and in the girl's soul was the peace of satisfaction and thankfulness that she had come again to her own. For added to her joy in her home-coming was a new joy that she and David had found together.

AN IDYL OF CENTRAL PARK

BY BRANDER MATTHEWS

ILLUSTRATED BY IRVING R. WILES



IT WAS nearly five o'clock on an afternoon early in May when Dr. Richard Demarest bicycled up Fifth Avenue and into Central Park. He looked at his watch to make sure of the hour, and then he dismounted on the western side of the broad drive, whence he could see everybody who might seek to enter the Park long before they were likely to discover him. He had reason to believe that Miss Minnie Contoit, who had refused to marry him only a fortnight before, and whom he had not seen since, was going to take a little turn on her wheel in the Park that afternoon.

As it had happened, he had gone into the club to lunch that morning, and he had met her only brother, with whom he had always carefully maintained the most pleasant relations. By ingeniously pumping Ralph Contoit he had ascertained that the girl he loved was going out at five with her father and her grandfather; and the brother had been even franker.

"I say," he had declared, "I don't know what has come over Minnie this last ten days; she's been as cross as two sticks, and generally she's pretty even-tempered for a girl, you know. But she's been so touchy lately; she nearly took my head off this morning! I guess you had better have Dr. Cheever come around and prescribe for her. Cocaine for a bad temper is what she needs now, I can tell you!"

Although he was a rejected lover he was not melancholy. In the springtime youth feels the joy of living, and Richard Demarest took delight in the beauty of the day. The foliage was everywhere fresh and vigorous after the persistent rains of April, and a scent of young blossoms came to him from a clump of bushes behind the path. A group of half a dozen girls flashed past him on their wheels, laughing lightly as they sped along home, each of them with a bunch of fragrant lilacs lashed to her handle-bar.

He followed them with his eye till they turned out of the Park; and then at the entrance he saw the girl he was waiting for riding her bicycle carefully across the car-tracks in Fifty-ninth Street. Her father and grandfather were with her, one on each side.

Dr. Demarest sprang on his wheel and sped on ahead. When he came to the foot of the Mall he swerved to the westward. Then he turned and retraced his path, reaching the branching of the ways just as General Contoit, with his son and his granddaughter, arrived there.

The General was nearly seventy, but he sat his wheel with a military stiffness, holding himself far more carefully than his son, the Professor. Between them came Miss Minnie Contoit, a slim slip of a girl, in a light brown cloth suit, with her pale blond hair coiled tightly under a brown alpine hat. They had just come up a hill and the General's face was ruddy, but the girl's was as colorless as ever. Demarest had often wondered why it was that no exercise ever brought a flush to her ivory cheeks.

He watched her now as her grandfather caught sight of him, and cried out, "Hello, Doctor! Out for a spin?"

He saw her look up, and then she glanced away swiftly, as though to choose her course of conduct before she acknowledged his greeting.

"Good-afternoon, General; how well you are looking this spring!" said Demarest. "Good-afternoon, Pro-

fessor. And you, too, Miss Contoit. Going round the Park, are you? May I join you?" He looked at her as he asked the question.

It was her grandfather who answered. "Come along, come along! We shall be delighted to have you!"

She said nothing. They were all four going up on the east side of the Mall, and they had already left behind them the bronze mass-meeting of misshapen celebrities which disfigures that broad plateau. A Park omnibus was loitering in front of them, and they could not pass it four abreast.

"Come on, papa," cried the girl; "let's leave grandpa and Dr. Demarest to take care of each other! We had better go ahead and show them the way!"

It struck Dr. Demarest that she was glad to get away from him, as though her sudden flight was an instinctive shrinking from his wooing. He smiled and held this for a good sign. He was in no hurry to have his talk out with her, and he did not mean to begin it until a proper opportunity presented itself. He was glad to have her in front of him, where he could follow her movements and get delight out of the sunshine through the branches as it fell molten on her fine, light hair. It pleased him to watch her firm strokes as they came to a hill, and to see that she rode with no waste of energy.

The General had done his duty in the long years of the war, and he liked to talk about what he had seen. Dr. Demarest was a good listener, and perhaps this was one reason why the old soldier was always glad of his company. The young doctor was considerate, also, and he never increased his pace beyond the gait most comfortable for his elder companion; and as they drew near to the Metropolitan Museum he guided the General away to the Fifth-Avenue entrance and thence back to the main road, by which excursion they avoided the long and steep hill, at the top of which stands Cleopatra's Needle. And as they

had ridden on the level rather rapidly they almost caught up with the General's son and granddaughter.

The two couples were close to each other as they went around the reservoir, along the shaded road on the edge of the Park, with the sidewalk of Fifth Avenue down below. Everywhere the grass was fresh and fragrant; and everywhere the squirrels were frequent and impertinent, cutting across the road almost under the wheels, or sitting up on the narrow sward in impudent expectation of the nuts gently thrown to them from the carriages.

When they came to McGown's Pass he saw the Professor suddenly dismount, and he thought that Minnie was going on alone and that her father had to call her back.

"Shall we rest here for a while, father?" asked the Professor, as the General and the Doctor dismounted.

"Just as you say," the old soldier answered; "just as you say. I'm not at all fatigued, not at all. But don't let us old fogies keep you young folks from your exercise. Minnie, you and the Doctor can ride on—"

"But, grandpa—" she began, in protest.

"I'll stay here a minute or two with your father," the General continued. "The Doctor is very kind to let me talk to him, but I'm sure he'd rather talk to you, my dear; so you two can run along together."

"I shall be delighted to accompany Miss Contoit if she cares to have a little spin," said Dr. Demarest, turning to her.

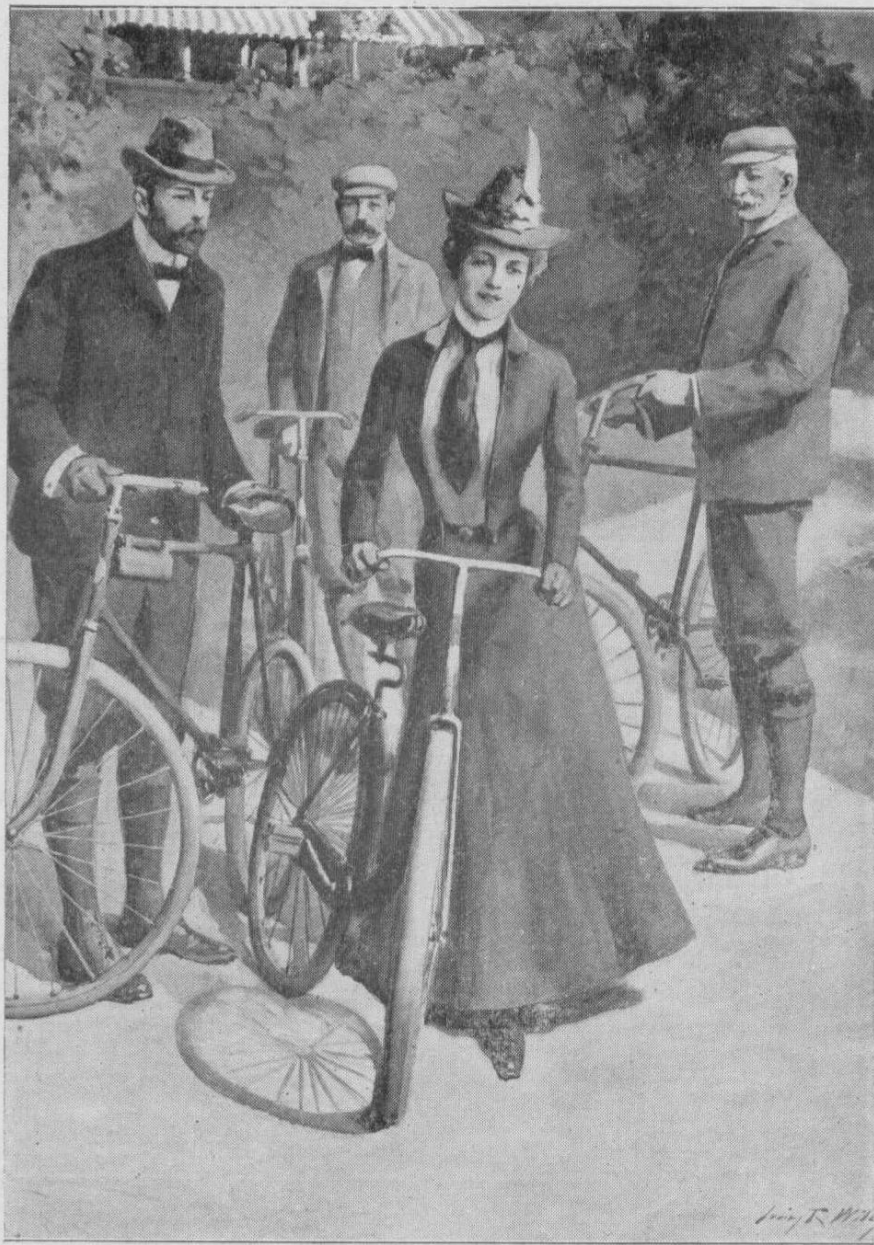
"Oh, well," she answered a little ungraciously; then she smiled swiftly, and added, "I always do what grandpa wants. Don't you think I'm a very good little girl?" And with that she started forward, springing lightly to her seat after her bicycle was in motion.

Demarest was jumping on his wheel to follow, when her father called out, "Don't let her ride uphill too fast, Doctor!"

"Isn't papa absurd?" she asked, laughing; "and

grandpa, too? They are always wanting me to take care of myself, just as if I didn't!"

They overtook and passed a woman weighing two hundred pounds and full forty years of age, who was toiling along on a bicycle, dressed in a white skirt, a



"'I'm sure he'd rather talk to you, my dear'"

pink shirt-waist and a straw sailor-hat. The Doctor turned and bowed to this strange apparition, but the plump lady was too fully occupied in her arduous task to be able to do more than gasp out, "Good—after—noon—Doctor—"

When they had gone one hundred yards ahead the Doctor's companion expressed her surprise. "You do know the funniest people!" she cried. "Who on earth was that?"

"That?" he echoed. "Oh, that's a patient of Dr. Cheever's. He advised her to get a bicycle if she wanted to be thinner—"

"And he told me to get one if I wanted to be a little fatter!" the girl interrupted. "Isn't that inconsistent?"

"I don't think so," the young man answered, glad that the conversation had taken this impersonal turn, and yet wondering how he could twist it to the point where he wanted it. "Outdoor exercise helps people to health, you see, and if they are unhealthily fat it tends to thin them down, and if they are very thin it helps them to put on flesh."

"I'd bike fourteen hours a day if I was a porpoise like that," said the girl, glancing back at the plump struggler behind them.

Just then a horn tooted and a coach came around the next turn. There were on it three or four girls in gay spring costumes, and two of them bowed to Dr. Demarest.

Behind the four-in-hand followed a stylish victoria, in which sat a handsome young woman alone. She was in black. Her somber face lighted with a smile as she acknowledged the young doctor's bow.

"I've seen her somewhere," said the girl by his side. "Who is she?"

"That's Mrs. Cyrus Poole," he answered; "the widow of the Wall Street operator, who died two years ago."

"What lots of people you know," she commented.

"How is a young doctor to get on unless he knows lots of people?" was his answer.

She said nothing for a minute or two, as they threaded their way through a tangle of vehicles stretching along the northernmost drive of the Park.

Then she asked, "Why is it that most of the women we have passed this afternoon sitting back in their carriages look bored to death?"

"I suppose it's because they've got all they want," the Doctor responded. "They have nothing left to live for; they have had everything. That's what makes them so useful to our profession. They send for us because they are bored, and they want sympathy. I suppose everybody likes to talk about himself, especially when he's out of sorts; now, you see, the family doctor can always be sent for, and it's his business to listen to your account of your symptoms. That's what he's paid for."

"I don't think that's a nice way of earning a living, do you?" returned the girl.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered. "Why not? It's our duty to relieve suffering, and these women are just suffering for a chance to describe all their imaginary ailments."

"Women?" she cried, indignantly. "Are all these old fools women?"

"There must be men sometimes, I suppose," he replied; "but most of a family physician's work is with the women, of course."

Then it seemed to him that he saw before him the opportunity he had been awaiting. They were now climbing the hill at the northwestern corner of the Park. He slowed up so that she should not be tempted to overexert herself. He even went so far as to lag a little behind. When they began to go down again gently he came alongside.

"By the way," he began, "speaking of what a family physician has to do reminds me that I want to ask your advice."

"My advice?" she echoed, with the light little laugh that thrilled through him always. "Why, I don't know anything about medicine."

"It isn't a professional consultation I want," he answered, laughing himself, "it's friendly counsel. Don't you remember that when you told me you couldn't love me you went on and said you hoped we should always be good friends?"

"Yes," she responded, calmly, "I remember that. And I do hope that if I can really show my friendliness in any way you will let me."

"That's what I am coming to," he returned. "You know, I've been helping Dr. Cheever as a sort of third man while Dr. Aspinwall has been ill? Well, Dr. Aspinwall isn't getting any better, and he's got to quit for a year, anyhow. So Dr. Cheever is going to take me with him—"

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she broke in, heartily. "That's splendid for you, isn't it?"

"It will be splendid for me if I can keep the place and do the work to his satisfaction," he answered.

"Oh, I guess Dr. Cheever knows what he is about," retorted the girl, gaily. "He knows how clever you are."

"Thank you," the young man returned. "I felt sure you would be pleased, because you have always been so kind to me."

He hesitated for a moment, and then continued. "I feel as if I owe you an apology—"

"What for?" she asked, in surprise.

"For the way I behaved last time we—we had a talk," he answered.

"Oh, then," she commented; and it seemed to him that she had almost made an effort to retain the non-committal expression she was affecting.

"You may remember," he went on, "that I asked you to marry me, and that you refused, and that you told me you didn't love me at all, but you did like me—"

"What's the use of going over all that again?" she asked.

"I must make myself right with you, Miss Minnie," he urged. "You said we could be friends, and I was all broke up then, and I didn't know just what I was saying, and I told you friendship wasn't any good to me, and if I couldn't have you there wasn't anything else I wanted. I must have been very rude, indeed, and it has worried me ever since."

"I'll forgive you, if that's what you mean," she responded. "I hadn't really thought about it twice. It isn't of any consequence."

"It is to me," he returned. "Now, I've changed my mind, and if you will offer the friendship again I'll accept it gladly."

"Why, Dr. Demarest!" she said, smiling, but with a flash in her gray eyes, "of course we can be good friends, just as we have always been. And now you needn't talk any more about this foolish misunderstanding."

So saying she started ahead. They had been climbing a hill, and now they had on their left a broad meadow, gay with groups of tennis-players. At an opening on the right a mounted policeman sat his horse as immovable as an equestrian statue. Just before them were two gentlemen with impatient trotters trying to get a clear space; and there was also a double file of young men and girls from some riding-school, under the charge of a robust German riding-master.

It was not for two or three minutes that Dr. Demarest was able to resume his position by the side of Miss Contoit.

"I had to set myself right," he began, abruptly, "because if we really are friends I want your help."

"I shall be very glad, I'm sure," she replied. "I've told you so already."

"But what I want is something very serious," he continued.

"What is it?" she asked, drawing away a little.

"It's advice," he explained.

She gave a light laugh of relief. "Oh, advice," she repeated; "anybody can give you advice."

"Not the advice I want," he responded, gravely.

"It's a very solemn thing for me, I can assure you."

"And what is this very solemn thing?" she inquired, airily.

"It's marriage," he answered. "I've got to get married, and—and—"

"Don't let's go back to that again," she said, with frank impatience. "I thought we had settled that once for all."

"Oh, I didn't mean you," he returned, apologetically.

"You didn't mean me?" she repeated, in amazement. "Why, I thought—well, it's no matter what I thought, of course."

"I'm afraid I'm getting things all mixed up," he said, calmly. "Of course, you are the only woman I love, and the only woman I ever shall love. I told you that the last time we met, and you told me that you didn't love me—so that settled it."

"Well?" she interrogated.

"Well, if I can't have what I want," he explained, "I'd better get what I need."

"I confess I do not know what you are talking about," she declared.

"It's simple enough," he returned. "I'm a doctor, and I'm young—I'm only thirty—and I haven't a bald spot yet, so people think I'm even younger than I am, and they haven't confidence in me. So I've got to get married."

The girl laughed out merrily. "Can't you get a bald spot any other way?" she asked.

"If I have a wife I don't need a bald spot," he responded. "A wife is a warrant of respectability. Every doctor will tell you that's the way patients feel. I'm tired of going to see some old woman for Dr.

Cheever, and sending up my card and overhearing her say, 'I won't see him! I don't want Dr. Demarest! I sent for Dr. Cheever, and it's Dr. Cheever I want to see!' That has happened to me, and not only once or twice, either."

"How could any woman be so unladylike?" the girl asked, indignantly. "She must have been a vulgar old thing!"

"There's more than one of her in New York," the young doctor asserted, "and that's one reason why I've got to get married. And between you and me, I think that my chance of staying with Dr. Cheever would be better if I had a wife. Of course, he doesn't say so, but I can't help knowing what he thinks."

The girl made no comment on this. They were on the crest of a hill, and they overlooked the broad expanse of the reservoir. The almost level rays of the sinking sun thrust themselves through the leafy branches and made a rosy halo about her fair head.

"So that's why I've come to you for advice," he began again.

"But I don't see what good my advice will be to you," she returned. "You don't expect me to pick out a wife for you, do you?"

"Well, that's about it!" he admitted.

"The idea!" she retorted. "Why, it's perfectly absurd!"

"So long as I cannot get the girl I love marriage ceases to be a matter of sentiment with me," he went on, stolidly. "I come to you as a friend who knows girls—knows them in a way no man can ever know them. I want your help in selecting a woman who will make a good wife for a doctor."

"How do you know she will have you?" she thrust at him.

"Of course, I don't know," he admitted. "I can't know till I try, can I? And if at first I don't succeed I must try, try again. If the one you pick out refuses me I'll have to get you to pick out another."

"So it's a mere marriage of convenience you are after?" the girl asked. "That's all very well for you, no doubt; but how about the woman who marries you? I don't think it's a very nice lookout for her, do you? That's just the way with you men always! You never think about the woman's feelings!"

"I'll do my duty to her," he answered.

"Your duty!" sniffed the girl, indignantly.

"I'll be so attentive to her that she will never guess my heart is given to another," he went on.

"Don't be too sure of that," she returned. "Women have very sharp eyes—sharper than you men think—especially about a thing like that!"

"I am not going to borrow trouble," the Doctor declared, suavely. "I shall always be as nice to her as I can, and if it is in my power to make her happy, then she will be happy. But we needn't anticipate. What I want you to do now is to help me to find the right woman. It will be my business to take care of her afterward."

"Oh, very well," said the girl, rather sharply. "Have you anybody in particular in view?"

"I haven't really fixed on anybody yet," he explained. "I wanted your advice first, for I'm going to rely on that. I feel sure you won't let me make a mistake about a matter so important to me!"

"Then don't let's waste any time!" she cried, peremptorily.

"Really," he declared, "it's astonishing how a little bit of a thing like you can be so bossy." She looked at him fiercely, so he made haste to add, "But I like it—I like it!"

The girl laughed, but with a certain constraint, so it seemed to him.

"Come, now," she said, "if I must help you, let me see your list of proposed victims!"

"Do you know Dr. Pennington, the rector of St. Boniface's, in Philadelphia?" he began. "Well, he has two daughters—nice girls, both of them—"

"Which one do you want?" asked the girl. "The tall one who squints or the fat one with red hair?"

"Come, now," he returned, "she doesn't really squint, you know."

"Call it a cast in her eye if you like; I don't mind. It isn't anything to me," she asserted. "Is it the tall one you want?"

"I don't care," he answered.

"You don't care?" she repeated.

"No," he returned; "that's why I've come to you. I don't care. Which one do you recommend?"

"I don't recommend either of them!" she responded, promptly. "I shouldn't be a true friend if I let you throw yourself away on one of those frights!"

"I'll give them up if you say so," said he; "but I've always heard that they are good, quiet girls—domesticated, you know—and—"

"Who is next?" she pursued, with a return of her arbitrary manner.

"Well," he suggested, bashfully, "I haven't any reason to suppose she would look at me, and it sounds so conceited in me to suggest that such a handsome woman—and so rich, too—would listen to me, but—"

"Who is this paragon?" his companion demanded.

"Didn't I mention her name?" he responded. "I thought I had. We passed her only a little while ago—Mrs. Poole."

"Mrs. Poole?" the girl replied. "That was the sickly looking creature in black lolling back in a victoria, wasn't it?"

"She isn't sickly, really," he retorted; "but I don't think mourning is becoming to her. Of course, if we are married she will wear colors and—"

"I didn't think you were willing to take up with a widow!" she interrupted, with a slight touch of acerbity. "I thought it was a girl for whom you were seeking!"

"It was a wife of some sort," he replied. "I don't know myself what would suit me best. That's why

I am consulting you. I'm going to rely on your judgment—"

"But you mustn't do that!" she cried.

"It is just what I've got to do!" he insisted. "And if you think it would be a mistake for me to marry a widow, why—it's for you to say."

"I must say that I think it would be a great mistake for a doctor to marry a woman who looks as if she couldn't live through the week," he responded. "I should suppose it would ruin any physician's practice to have a wife as woe-begone as that Mrs. Poole! Of course, I don't know her, and I've nothing to say against her, and she may be as beautiful and as charming as you say she is."

"I give her up at once!" he declared, laughing. "She shall never even know how near she came to having a chance to reject me."

"Is that all?" the girl asked, a little spitefully. "Have you anybody else on your list?"

"I have only just one more," he replied.

"Who is she?" was the girl's quick question.

"I'm not sure that you have met her," he returned. "She's from the South or Southwest, I don't know—"

"What's her name?" was the impatient query.

"Chubb," he answered. "It's not a pretty name, is it? But that doesn't matter if I'm to persuade her to change it."

"Chubb?" the girl repeated, as though trying to recall the name. "Chubb? Not Virgie Chubb?"

"Her name is Virginia," he admitted.

The girl by his side laughed a little shrilly. "Virgie Chubb?" she cried. "That scrawny thing?"

The Doctor confessed that Miss Chubb was not exactly plump.

"Not plump? I should think not, indeed," the girl declared. "Do you know what Miss Marlenspuyk said about her? She said that Virgie Chubb looked like a death's-head on a toothpick! That's what she said."

They were approaching the Mall, and the Doctor knew that his time was now very brief. They had to slow up just then, as a policeman was conveying across the broad road three or four nurses with a baby-carriage or two, and then they had to steer clear of half a dozen working-men going home across the Park, with pipes in their mouths and dinner-pails swinging in their hands.

"So you don't think Miss Chubb would be a good wife for me?" he inquired.

"I have nothing to say at all! It isn't really any of my business!" she replied. "It is simply absurd of you to ask me!"

"But you must help me out," he urged. "So far you have only told me that I mustn't marry any of the girls I had on my list."

"I don't want to see you throw yourself away," she returned. "A pretty kind of a friend I should be if I encouraged you to marry your Virgie Chubb and your Widow Poole!"

"That's it, precisely," he asserted; "that's why I've come to you. Of course, I don't want to throw myself away. Your advice has been invaluable to me. But so far you have only shown me how it is that none of these girls will suit. That brings me no nearer my object. I've simply got to have a wife."

"I don't see why you need be in such a hurry," she replied.

"I must, I must!" he retorted. "And there's one more girl I haven't mentioned so far—"

"You've kept her to the last!" she snapped.

"Yes, I've kept her to the last, because I haven't any right even to hope that she would have me. She is not a widow, and she hasn't a cast in her eye, and she is neither fat nor scrawny; she is just a lovely young girl—"

"You speak of her with more enthusiasm than you did of any of others," she broke in. "Do I know her?"

"You ought to know her," he answered; "but I doubt if you think as well of her as I do."

"Who is she?" was her swift question.

"You won't be offended?"

"Of course not! How absurd! Why should I be offended?" she responded. "Who is she? Who is she?"

The Doctor answered seriously, and with a quaver of emotion in his voice, "She is the girl I have loved for a long time, and her name is Minnie Contoit!"

The girl did not say anything. Her face was as pale as ever, but there was a light in the depths of her cool gray eyes.

"Listen to me once more, Minnie!" implored the young fellow by her side. "You say that none of these other girls will suit me, and I knew that before you said it. I knew that you were the only girl I ever wanted. You promised me your friendship the last time we talked this over, and now I've a chance to tell you how much I need a wife I have hoped you would look at the matter in a clearer light."

She said nothing. He gave her a hasty glance backward and he saw that her father and her grandfather were only a hundred yards or so behind them. The reddening sunset on their right cast lengthening shadows across the road. The spring day was drawing to an end, and the hour had come when he was to learn his fate forever.

"Minnie," he urged once more, "don't you think it is your duty—as a friend, you know—to give me the wife I ought to have?"

She looked at him, and laughed nervously, and then dropped her eyes.

"Oh, well," she said at last, "if I must!"

ROMANCE OF A SOUL

BY ROBERT GRANT

ILLUSTRATED BY C. M. RELYEA

WHEN Marion Willis became a school-mistress in the Glendale public school at twenty-two she regarded her employment as a transient occupation, to be terminated presently by marriage. She possessed an imaginative temperament, and one of her favorite and most satisfying habits was to evoke from the realm of the future a proper hero, shining with zeal and virtue like Sir Galahad, in whose arms she would picture herself living happily ever after a sweet courtship, punctuated by due maidenly hesitation. This fondness for letting her fancy run riot and evolve visions splendid with happenings for her own advancement and gladness was not confined to matrimonial day-dreams. On the morning when she entered the school-house door for the first time the eyes of her mind saw the curtain which veils the years divide, and she beheld herself a famous educator, still young, but long since graduated from primary teaching. She forgot the vision of her Sir Galahad there. Nor were the circumstances of her several day-dreams necessarily consistent in other respects. It sufficed for her spiritual exaltation that they should be merely a fairy-like manifestation in her own favor. But though she loved to give her imagination rein, the fairy-like quality of these visions was patent to Miss Willis, for she possessed a quiet sense of humor as a sort of east-wind supplementary

to the sentimental and poetic properties of her nature. She had a way of poking fun at herself, which, when exercised, sent the elfin figures scattering with a celerity suggestive of the departure of her own scholars at the twinkle of the bell for dismissal.

Then she was left alone with her humor and her New England conscience, that stern adjuster of real values and enemy of spiritual dissipation. The same conscience was a vigilant monitor in the matter of her school-teaching, despite Miss Willis' reasonable hope that Sir Galahad would claim her soon. The hope would have been reasonable in the case of any one of her sex, for every woman is said to be given at least one opportunity to become a wife; but in the case of Miss Willis nature had been more than commonly bounteous. She was not a beauty, but she was sweet and fresh-looking, with clean, honest eyes, and a cheery, gracious manner such as is apt to captivate discerning men. She was one of those wholesome spirits, earnest and refined, yet prone to laughter, which do not remain long unmated in the ordinary course of human experience. But her conscience did not permit her to dwell on this advantage to the detriment of her scholars.

Miss Willis lived at her home with her mother. They owned their small house. The other expenses were defrayed from the daughter's salary; hence, strict economy was obligatory, and the expenditure of every five-dollar bill was a matter of moment. Miss Willis' father had died when she was a baby. The meager sum of money which he left had sufficed to keep his widow and only child from want until Marion's majority. All had been spent except the house; but, as Miss Willis now proudly reflected, she had become a bread-winner, and her mother's declining years were shielded from poverty. They would be able to manage until Sir Galahad arrived, and when he came one of the joys of her surrender would be that her mother's old age would also be brightened.

Glendale, as its name denotes, had been a rustic village. When Miss Willis was engaged (to teach school, not to be married) it was a thriving, bustling, overgrown, manufacturing town already yearning to become a city. By the end of another five years Glendale had realized its ambition, and Miss Willis was still a teacher in its crowded grammar-school. How the years creep, yet how they fly, when one is busy with regular, routine employment! The days are such a repetition of each other that they sometimes seem very long, but when one pauses and looks back one starts at the accumulation of departed time, and deplores the swiftness of the seasons.

Five years had but slightly dimmed the freshness of Miss Willis' charms. She was as comely as ever. She was a trifle stouter, a trifle less girlish in manner, and only a trifle—what shall we call it?—wilted in appearance. The close atmosphere of a school-room is not conducive to rosiness of complexion; and the constant strain of guiding over forty immature minds in the paths of knowledge will weigh upon the flesh though the soul be patient and the heart light. Miss Willis' class comprised the children whose average age was twelve to thirteen—those who had been in the school three years. They were both boys and girls. They remained with her a year before being passed on. She had begun with the youngest children, but promotion had presently established her in this position.

Forty immature minds—minds just groping on the threshold of life—to be watched, shaped and helped for ten months, and their individual needs treated with sympathy and patience. For ten months—the school term—then to be exchanged for a new batch, and so from year to year. Glendale's manufacturing population included several nationalities, so that the little army of scholars which sat under Miss Willis' eye included Poles, Italians, negroes, and now and then a youthful Chinaman, as well as the sons and daugh-

ters of the merchant, the tailor, the butcher and baker and other citizens whose title as Americans was of older date. It was not easy to keep the atmosphere of such a school-room wholesome, for the apparel of the poorest children, though often well darned, was not always clean, and the ventilating apparatus represented a political job. But it was Miss Willis' pride that she knew the identity of every one of her boys and girls, and carried it by force of love and will written on her brain as well as on the desk-tablets, which she kept as a safeguard against possible lapses of memory. She loved her classes, and it was a grief to her at first to be obliged to pass them on at the end of the school year. But habit reconciles us to the inevitable, and she presently learned to steel her heart against a too sensitive point of view in this respect, and to supplement the bleeding ties thus rudely severed with a fresh set without crying her eyes out. Yet though faithful teachers are thus schooled to forget, they rarely do, and Miss Willis found herself keeping track, in her mind's eye, of her little favorites—some of them youthful reprobates—in their progress up the ladder of knowledge and out into the world.

But what of Sir Galahad? He had dallied, but about this time—the sixth year of her life as a teacher—he appeared. Not as she had imagined him—a lover of great personal distinction, amazing talents, compelling virtues and large estates; yet, nevertheless, a presentable being in trousers, whose devotion touched her maidenly heart until it reciprocated the passion which his lips expressed. He was a young bookkeeper in a banker's office, with a taste for literary matters and a respectable gift for private theatricals. A small social club was the medium by which they became intimate. Sir Galahad was refined and gentlemanly in appearance and bearing, a trifle too delicate for perfect manliness, yet, as Miss Willis' mother justly observed, a gentle soul to live with. He had

a taste for poetry, and a sentimental vein which manifested itself in verses of a Wordsworthian simplicity descriptive of his lady love's charms. No wonder Marion fell in love with him, and renounced, without even a sigh of regret, her vision of a husband with lordly means. Sir Galahad had only his small means, which was not enough for a matrimonial venture. They would wait, in the hope that some opportunity for preferment would present itself. So for three years—years when she was in the heyday of her comeliness—they attended the social club as an engaged couple, and fed their mutual passion on the poets and occasional chaste embraces. Marion felt sure that something would happen before long to redeem the situation and establish her Sir Galahad in the seat to which his merit entitled him. Her favorite vision was of some providential catastrophe, even an epidemic or wholesale maiming by which the partners of the banking-house and all in authority over her lover should be temporarily incapacitated, and the entire burden of the business be thrown on his shoulders long enough to demonstrate his true worth. As a sequel she beheld him promptly admitted to partnership and herself blissfully married.

The course of events did not respect her vision. After they had been engaged nearly four years Sir Galahad came to the conclusion one day that the only hope of establishing himself in business on his own account was (to repeat his own metaphor) to seize the bull by the horns and go West. Marion bravely and enthusiastically seconded his resolution, and fired his spirit by her own prophesy as to his rapid success. Western real estate for Eastern investors was the line of business to which Sir Galahad decided to fasten his hopes. He set forth upon his crusade protesting that within a twelve-month he would win a home for Marion and her mother in the fashionable quarter of St. Paul, Minnesota, and carrying in his valise a toilet-case tastefully embroidered

by his sweetheart, in a corner of which were emblazoned two hearts beating as one.

Marion returned to her scholars more than ever convinced that her employment was but a transient occupation. What followed was this: Sir Galahad put out his sign as a broker in Western real estate for Eastern investors, and fifteen months slipped away before he earned more than his bare living expenses. He had carried with him his poetic tastes and his gift for private theatricals. The first of these he exercised in his fond letters home; the second he employed for the entertainment of the social club in St. Paul, to which he presently obtained admittance. By the end of the second year he was doing better financially, but his letters to Marion had become less frequent and less frank in regard to his own circumstances and doings. There came a letter at last from Sir Galahad—a letter of eight pages of soul stress and sorrow, as he would call it, and of disingenuous wriggling, as the world would call it—in which he explained as delicately as was possible under the circumstances that his love for Miss Willis had become the love of a brother for a sister, and that he was engaged to be married to Miss Virginia Crumb, the only daughter of Hon. Cephas I. Crumb, owner and treasurer of the Astarte Metal Works, of Minnesota. Exit Sir Galahad! And following his perfidy Marion's imagination evoked a vision of revenge in which she figured as the plaintiff in a breach-of-promise suit, and had the fierce yet melancholy joy of confronting him and his new love face to face before a sympathizing judge and jury. But her New England conscience and her sense of humor combined disposed of this vision in a summary fashion, so that she let Sir Galahad off with the assurance that it was a happiness to her that he had discovered how little he cared for her before it was too late. Then her New England conscience bade her settle down to her teaching with a grim courage, and be thankful that she had never been unfaithful to her

work. Also her sense of humor told her that she must not assume all men to be false because Sir Galahad had been. It was then, when she needed him sorely, that destiny introduced Jimmy on the scene.

Jimmy was no Sir Galahad. He was a chunky, round-faced school-boy with brown hair, which, when it had not been cut for a month, blossomed into close, curly tangles. At first sight Jimmy was dull-eyed, and in the class his mental processes were so slow that he had already acquired among his mates the reputation of being stupid. The teacher who had taught him last confided to Miss Willis that she feared Jimmy was hopeless. Hopeless! Somehow the word went to Marion's heart. Not that she was hopeless; far from it she would have told you. But her sense of humor did not conceal from her that in spite of her grin-and-bear-it mien she was far from happy. At any rate, the suggestion that Jimmy was hopeless awoke a sympathetic chord in her breast, so that she looked at him more tenderly on the day after she had been told. Jimmy was slow of speech and rather dirty as to his face. There were warts on his hands, and his sphinx-like countenance was impassive almost to the point of stolidity. Somehow, though, Miss Willis said to herself, in her zeal to characterize him fairly, the little thirteen-year-old product of democracy (Jimmy was the son of a carpenter and a grocer's daughter) suggested power; suggested it as a block of granite or a bulldog suggests it. His compact, sturdy frame and well-poised head, with its close, brown curls, seemed a protest in themselves against hopelessness. On the third day he smiled; it was in recess that she detected him at it. An organ-grinder's monkey in the school-yard called it forth, a sweet, glad smile, which lit up his dense features as the sun at twilight will pierce through and illuminate for a few minutes a sullen cloud-bank. Miss Willis saw in a vision on the spot a refuge from hopelessness. Behind that smile there must be a winsome

soul. That spiritless expression was but a veil or rind hiding the germs of sensibility and reason. This was discovery number one. After it came darkness again so far as outward manifestation was concerned. Jimmy's attitude toward his lessons appeared to be one of utter density. He listened with blank but slightly lowered eyes. When questioned he generally gurgled inarticulately, as though seeking a response, then broke down. Occasionally he essayed an answer, which revealed that he had understood nothing. Oftener he sought refuge in complete silence. But hope had been stimulated in Miss Willis' breast, and she relaxed neither scrutiny nor tenderness. One day matters were brought to a head by the thoughtless jest of a classmate, a flaxen-haired fairy, who, in the recess following one of Jimmy's least successful gurgles, crept up behind him and planted upon his curls a brown-paper cap, across which the little witch had painted "DUNCE" in large capital letters.

Jimmy did not know what had happened. For a moment he thought perhaps that he had been introduced to some new game. But the jeers of the children checked the rising smile and led him to pluck at his forehead. As he gazed at the fool's cap in his hand a roar of merciless laughter greeted his discovery. Miss Willis had realized the fairy's deed too late to prevent the catastrophe. The sharp tap of her ruler on the desk produced a silence interjected with giggles. The fairy was a successful scholar and would not have harmed a fly willingly. It was a case of fun—the rough expression of an indisputable fact. Jimmy was such a dunce that he ought really to wear the brand as a notice to the world. What Miss Willis said by way of reproof to the fairy is immaterial. If Jimmy heard it he gave no sign. He dropped his head upon his desk and was sobbing audibly. The bewildered children harkened to the protest against cruelty with that elfin look which mischievous youth

dares assume, while the culprit stood with a finger in her mouth, not quite understanding the enormity of her conduct. In a moment more they were in the school-yard and Miss Willis was beside Jimmy's desk patting his tangled head. He wept as though his heart would break.

"No matter, Jimmy; it was only a thoughtless jest. She didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

Her words and variations on the same theme called forth successive bursts of sobs. Only silence diminished their intensity. When at last they had become only quiverings of his shoulders he looked up and said, with a wail of fierce despair, but with a grasp upon self which was a fresh revelation:

"It's true; it's true! She did it because I'm so stupid!"

Thereupon his shoulders shook again convulsively, and he burst into fresh grief.

Marion's arms were about him in an instant. "Jimmy, Jimmy, it is not true! You are not stupid! You and I will fight it out together! Will you trust me, Jimmy?"

He sobbed, but she could perceive that he was listening. Had her hope become his? Surely they were words he had never heard before.

"Jimmy, listen to me. I have found out something, and all owing to that ridiculous dunce-cap. It is I who have been stupid. I never knew until now how much you wish to learn and to improve. You are not stupid, Jimmy. I am sure of it. You are slow, but you and I will put our heads together and make the best of that. Will you try with me, Jimmy?"

The curly head was raised again. His tear-stained eyes looked out at her shyly, but with a beam of astonished gratitude. From his quivering lips fell a low but resolute "Yes, ma'am!"

"We will begin to-day. We need each other, Jimmy."

As a work of art grows slowly from confusion and lack of form to coherence and definiteness to the moral joy of its maker, so her experience in human plastic enterprise filled the heart of Miss Willis with a vital happiness. For two years—day in and day out—she never flagged in her task of giving sight to the eyes, and ears to the mind of the unshaped clay which fate had put into her hands for making or marring. How patient she had to be! How ingenious, vigilant and sympathetic! Through working upon the souls of Jimmy's father and mother by pathetic appeal she obtained permission to keep him an hour after school each day and drill him step by step, inch by inch. She brought her midday meal and shared it with him. In the evening she framed cunning devices to lure his budding intelligence. And from the very first she beheld her figure of human ignorance respond to her gentle molding. Jimmy's soul was first of all a hot-spring of ambition, the evidences of which, when recognized, were ever paramount. But how blocked and intricate were the passages through which this yearning for fame sought to equip the functions of its own being. Sometimes it seemed even to her as though she would never dissipate the fog-bank which tortured his intelligence. But Jimmy was patient, too, and his bulldog features were but the reflex of a grim tenacity of purpose. At the end of the first year she reported that he was unfit to be promoted, in order that she need not lose him just when he needed her most. She was able to make clear to Jimmy that this was not a disgrace, but a sign of progress. But when the end of the second year came she passed him on. Her task was done. The dull, clouded brow was clear with the light of eager reason; the still struggling faculties had begun to understand that in slowness there was the compensation of power, and were resolute with hope.

"Good-by, Miss Willis. I'm going to be at the head of my class next year; see if I'm not!"

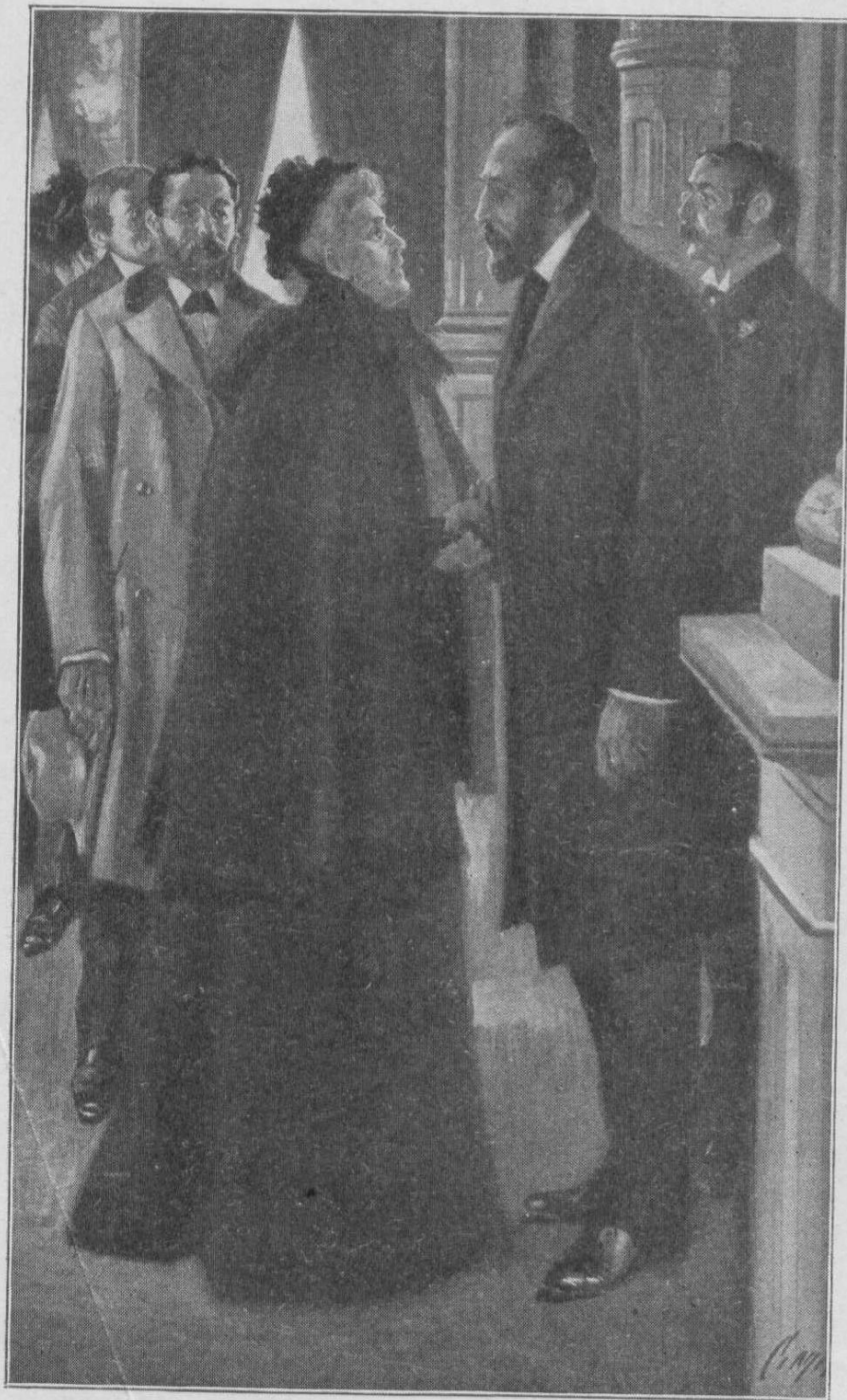
So said Jimmy as he left her. She hesitated a moment, then stooped and kissed him. It made her blush, for she had never kissed a pupil before, nor any one but her mother since Sir Galahad. It made Jimmy blush, too, for he did not know exactly what to make of it. So they parted, and Jimmy went up the ladder of knowledge for two years more at that school. He was not the head of his class; he was number five the first year and number three the second. When he graduated he promised to write; but, boy-like, he never did, so he vanished into the open polar world, and was lost to the eyes of the woman who had grown gray in his service.

Yes, Miss Willis had grown gray. That is, there were more or less becoming threads of silver in her maiden tresses, and the dignity of middle age had added inches to her waist and a few interesting lines to her forehead. There was no new Sir Galahad on the horizon even of her day-dreams, and her mother was in failing health. Mrs. Willis continued now to fail for five years—years which taxed her daughter's strength, though not her affection. Pupils came and went—pupils to whom she gave herself with the faithfulness of her New England conscience—but no one exactly like Jimmy. He remained unique, yet lost in the stress of life. When her mother died she settled down as an incorrigible old maid, and her day-dreams knew no more the vision of a love coming from the clouds to possess her. Nor did the years bring with them realization of that other vision—herself enthroned in the public mind as a wonderful educator to whom the world should bow. She was only Miss Marion Willis, the next to the oldest and the most respected teacher of the Glendale grammar-school. So she found herself at the end of twenty-five years of continuous service. It did occur to her as a delightful possibility that the authorities or scholars or somebody would observe this quarter-centennial anniversary in a suitable manner, and a

vision danced before her mind's eye of a surprise-party bearing a pretty piece of silver or a clock as a memorial of her life-work. But the date came and passed without comment from any source, and Marion's sense of humor made the best of it by drinking her own health on the evening of the day in question, and congratulating herself that she loved her work and was happy. At that supper there was no guest save Jimmy's tintype, which she fetched from the mantelpiece and leaned against the cake-basket on the table. Jimmy stood now not only for himself, but for a little army of struggling souls upon whom her patient intelligence had been freely lavished.

Of course, Jimmy was found. Miss Willis had always felt sure that he would be. But ten years more had slipped away before he was brought to light. One day she discovered his name in the newspaper as a rising political constellation, and she was convinced, without the least particle of evidence to support her credulity, that the James in question was her Jimmy. His name had suddenly become prominent in the political firmament on account of his resolute conduct as the mayor of a Western city. The public had been impressed by his strength and pluck and executive ability, working successfully against a gang of municipal cutthroats, and his name was being paraded over the country.

"I've half a mind to write to him and discover if it's he," Miss Willis said to herself. "How surprised he would be to receive a postal-card 'Are you my Jimmy?'" But somehow she refrained. She did not wish to run the risk of disappointment, though she was sure it was he. She preferred to wait and to watch him now that she had him under her eye again. This was an easy thing to do, for Jimmy the Mayor became Jimmy the Governor before two years passed, and one morning Miss Willis found facing her in the "Daily Dispatch" a newspaper cut of large dimen-



“I am very glad to see you, Miss Willis”

sions which set her heart beating as it had not throbbed since the days of Sir Galahad. It was a portrait of her Jimmy; Jimmy magnified and grown into a hirsute man, but the same old Jimmy with the tangled hair, serious brow and large, pathetic eyes. Miss Willis laughed and Miss Willis cried, and presently, after she had time to realize the full meaning of what had happened, she had a vision of Jimmy in the White House, and herself, a venerable yet hale old woman, standing beside him in a famous company, and Jimmy was saying before them all, "I wish to make you acquainted with my dear teacher—the woman to whom I owe my start in life." The idea tickled her imagination, and she said to herself that she would keep the secret until that happy day arrived. What a delightful secret it was, and how surprised he would be when she said to him, "I suppose you don't recognize me, Jimmy?" Then perhaps he would embrace her before everybody, and the newspapers would have her picture and give the particulars of her life.

Jimmy was not elected President until four years later, and in the meantime Miss Willis kept her secret. When he was nominated, and the details of his career were eagerly sought for, it was announced by the press that in early life he had attended the Glendale grammar-school, and the fact was regarded by the authorities as a feather in the school's cap, and was commemorated during the campaign by the display in the exhibition hall of a large picture of the candidate festooned with an American flag. It was vaguely remembered that he had been under Miss Willis, among other teachers, but the whole truth was unknown to anybody, and Marion's New England spirit shrank from obtaining glory and sympathy through brag. She hugged her secret, and bore it with her intact when she took her departure for Washington to attend the inauguration ceremonies. She did not tell the authorities where she was going

when she asked for a leave of absence—the first she had ever requested in all her years of service. She was setting forth on the spree of her life, and her spirit was jubilant at the thought of Jimmy's amazement when he found out who she was.

A day came at last, after the new chief magistrate had taken the oaths of office and was in possession of the White House, when the American public was at liberty to file past their President and shake his hand in their might as free men and free women. Miss Willis had not been able to obtain a location near enough to the inauguration proceedings to distinguish more than the portly figure of a man, or to hear anything except the roar of the multitude. But now she was to have the chance to meet Jimmy face to face and overwhelm him with her secret. Little by little the file of visitors advanced on its passage toward the nation's representative, and presently Miss Willis caught her first glimpse of Sir Galahad—her real Sir Galahad. Her heart throbbed tumultuously. It was he—her Jimmy; he beyond the shadow of a doubt; a strong, grave, resolute man; the prototype of human power and American intelligence.

Her Jimmy! She let her eyes fall, for it would soon be her turn, and her nerves were all tingling with a happy mixture of pride and diffidence. Her vision, her dearest vision was about to be realized. There was no chance for delusion or disappointment now. So it seemed. Yet as she stood there waiting, with her New England conscience and her sense of humor still alive, of a sudden her imagination was seized by a new prospect. Why should she tell her secret? What was the use? There he stood—her Jimmy—good, great and successful, and she had helped to make him so. Nothing could ever deprive her of that. The truth was hers forever. She was only an elderly spinster. Perhaps he would have forgotten. He was but fifteen when he left her, and he had never written to her during all these years. Very

likely he did not realize at all what she had done for him. Nothing which he could do for her now would add to the joy of her heart. Secret? To share it with him might spoil all. The chances were it was her secret only; only she could understand it. Some one at her ear was asking her name—she was close to the President now. Suddenly she heard her name called, and stepping forward she was face to face with her soul's knight and he was holding her hand.

"I am very glad to see you, Miss Willis," she heard him say.

She had been stepping shyly, with her eyes lowered. At his words, spoken in a voice which for all its manliness was still the same, she looked up into his face, and murmured, as she pressed his fingers:

"God bless you, sir!"

She did not even say "Jimmy." Then she passed, and—and her secret was safe.

Six months later Miss Willis was found one morning dead in her bed. She had died peacefully in her sleep. When her personal effects were administered there was noticed on the mantelpiece in her sitting-room a mounted tintype, on the paper back of which were two inscriptions. Of these the upper, in faded ink, contained a date forty years prior, and the legend "From Jimmy." The other, recent and written with the pen of an elderly person, ran as follows, "Portrait of the President of the United States as a school-boy."